

Negro Romance



JUNE
10¢
NO. 1



**A TRAGIC VOW
MY HEART'S DILEMMA
TOO LATE FOR LOVE**

Sweethearts

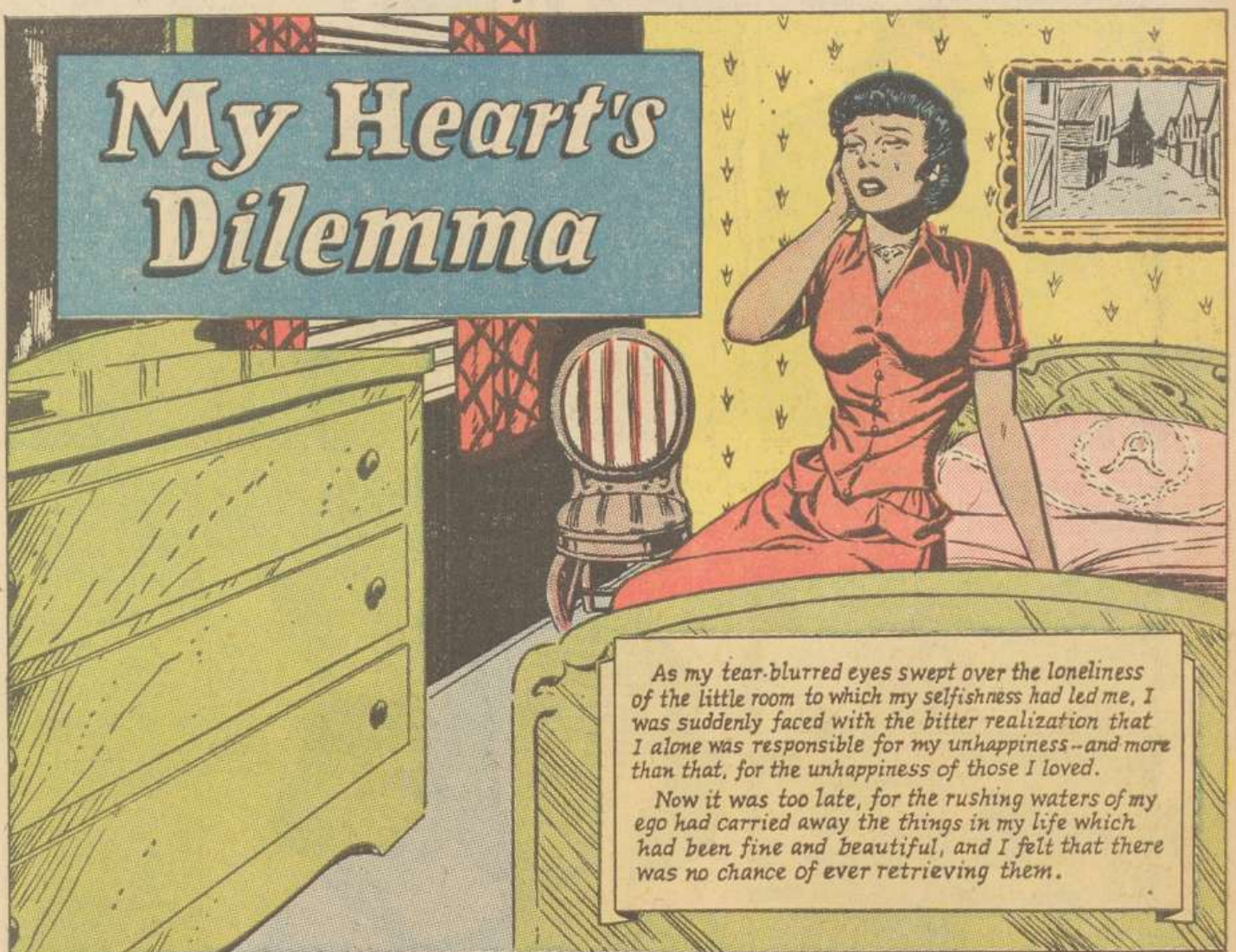
*R*emember the first time he sent you roses,
the sweet tenderness of your first romance?
Those wonderful moments will live anew
when you read these true-to-life picture
love stories in...



THE PICTURE
ROMANCE MAGAZINE
THAT ENTHRALLS
OVER TWO
MILLION READERS

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My Heart's Dilemma



As my tear-blurred eyes swept over the loneliness of the little room to which my selfishness had led me, I was suddenly faced with the bitter realization that I alone was responsible for my unhappiness—and more than that, for the unhappiness of those I loved.

Now it was too late, for the rushing waters of my ego had carried away the things in my life which had been fine and beautiful, and I felt that there was no chance of ever retrieving them.

I guess it must have begun from the moment my parents were killed and I went to live with Aunt Lou. She had been my whole world from that moment on, and I had clung to her. Yet, it seemed as if the night she had met Jim Taylor had been the real beginning...

AUNT LOUISE! I'M GLAD YOU'RE HOME... I WAS GETTING WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

WORRIED ABOUT ME, AT MY AGE? WHY, MARJORIE, YOU'RE MORE OF AN OLD WOMAN THAN I AM.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

TO THE McLAUGHLIN'S TO PLAY BRIDGE. THEY FOUND A VERY CHARMING PARTNER FOR ME. HIS NAME IS JIM TAYLOR, AND HE BROUGHT ME HOME. SO YOU SEE, I WAS IN PERFECTLY SAFE HANDS.

NEGRO ROMANCE



But I didn't go to sleep for a long time. Perhaps it was intuition that warned me, or perhaps it was because Aunt Lou had been as flushed and gay as a girl in her teens. I had never seen her like that before. It was only a couple of nights later when...



As I dressed, I couldn't help thinking about this man, Taylor. Oh, Aunt Lou had gone out with other men occasionally, but there was something different about this -- the way she acted, the way she looked when she talked about him. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but it worried me...



NEGRO ROMANCE



But I knew the fact that I was tired wasn't the real reason for my preoccupation, but rather Ray's words, coupled with my own thoughts about Aunt Lou and Jim Taylor. Then, the doorbell rang...



Jim Taylor was probably three or four years older than Aunt Lou, a husky, outdoor type, with a wide grin and a friendliness that would have made most people like him immediately... but I had already made up my mind that I didn't want to like him.



My first reaction was to refuse abruptly, but then I thought better of it, figuring it was a good way to keep an eye on Aunt Lou...



NEGRO ROMANCE

It was a very pleasant evening for everyone but me, for inwardly I was seething with doubts and fears.

Jim Taylor was kind and considerate with Aunt Lou--and she basked in the radiance of his charm. Already I had visions of him spiriting Aunt Lou away to Perryville, leaving me alone...

I'M SO GLAD THAT YOU AND RAY CAME ALONG WITH US THIS EVENING. AND I DO HOPE THAT YOU LIKED JIM.

HE-- HE SEEMED ALL RIGHT. BUT, AUNT LOU-- WHO IS HE? I MEAN, YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.



WHY, I ONLY KNOW WHAT HE'S TOLD ME. HE HAS A SMALL RANCH NEAR PERRYVILLE, AND HE'S NEVER MARRIED BECAUSE OF A MUCH YOUNGER BROTHER HE'S HAD TO LOOK AFTER. BUT HE'S VERY PLEASANT AND NICE. BESIDES-- I'M SURE THE McLAUGHLINS WOULDN'T--

THERE, YOU SEE! IT'S JUST AS I SAID. YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM!



MARJORIE, WHY WOULD YOU SUSPECT THAT HE IS ANYTHING BUT WHAT HE SAYS HE IS? DON'T YOU LIKE HIM-- IS THAT THE REASON?

NO, OF COURSE NOT. IT'S JUST THAT, WELL-- I WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE YOU GET HURT, AUNT LOU.



I didn't tell Aunt Lou that I was afraid Jim Taylor might upset our peaceful existence. If they fell in love-- I would be an outsider! That mustn't happen! I took pleasure in conjuring up doubts in Aunt Lou's mind. Yet, when I came home from work, one evening...

MARJORIE-- WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, DEAR. WE THOUGHT PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE DINNER WITH US.

YES-- PLEASE COME ALONG, MARJORIE.

AUNT LOU KNOWS I'M TOO TIRED TO GO OUT AFTER WORKING LATE. I'LL HAVE SOMETHING HERE AND GO ON TO BED.



WHY, MARJORIE--

I'M SORRY IF I DID THE WRONG THING. I JUST THOUGHT GOING OUT

FOR DINNER WOULD MAKE IT EASIER!

IT DOESN'T MATTER. I'M SURE YOU'LL EXCUSE ME-- GOOD NIGHT.



All I could think of was that Aunt Lou would never have thought of doing such a thing before he came along. She would have stayed home and cooked for me. So, when she came home a few hours later, I was still boiling from the imagined injustice...

MARJORIE. MARJORIE, ARE YOU ASLEEP?

NO, AUNT LOU, I'M NOT. BUT I'M VERY TIRED-- AND IT'S TOO LATE TO TALK.



I'M-- I'M SORRY, MARJORIE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO DISTURB YOU. GOOD NIGHT.

GOOD NIGHT.



NEGRO ROMANCE

Breakfast the next morning was a tense affair, and Aunt Lou did not seem to feel it was necessary for her to make apologies, as I had thought she might. Feeling that I was going to need an aid in my battle, I put in a hurried call to Ray! We met for lunch...



--AND THERE'S THAT "YOUNG LOVE" LOOK ABOUT HER. IT FRIGHTENS ME, RAY.

HONEY, DON'T YOU THINK MAYBE YOU'RE TAKING THIS WHOLE THING TOO SERIOUSLY?

RAY MARTIN, HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH A THING? AUNT LOU'S WHOLE FUTURE HAPPINESS MAY BE AT STAKE-- AND A GREAT DEAL OF MINE!

ALL RIGHT-- SO, SUPPOSE SHE FALLS IN LOVE. IS THAT TERRIBLE? JIM'S PROBABLY A NICE GUY. BESIDES, IF AUNT LOU MARRIES, YOU'LL HAVE ONE LESS EXCUSE FOR NOT BECOMING MRS. RAY MARTIN.



AND ISN'T IT POSSIBLE YOU'RE WORRYING ABOUT YOUR OWN HAPPINESS FIRST-- ABOUT NOT HAVING ANYONE TO KEEP A HOME FOR YOU AND LOOK AFTER YOU?

THAT'S A TERRIBLE THING TO SAY, RAY. YOU KNOW THAT ALL I'M WORRIED ABOUT IS THAT AUNT LOU MIGHT MAKE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

The meeting with Ray hadn't worked out quite as I had planned, for now I almost had the feeling that he was on their side. The only thing for me to do was to redouble my efforts against Jim Taylor...



FLOWERS? FROM WHOM-- OH, MR. TAYLOR, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.

HELLO, MARJORIE. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND. LOUISE INVITED ME FOR DINNER.



OH, AUNT LOU, I THOUGHT WE COULD HAVE JUST A QUIET DINNER HERE TOGETHER. I DIDN'T KNOW--

I'M SORRY, DEAR. BUT I HAD PROMISED TO GO OUT WITH JIM, AND THEN DECIDED TO HAVE DINNER HERE WHEN YOU PHONED YOU'D BROKEN YOUR DATE WITH RAY.



WHAT'S THAT?

BUTTERSCOTCH PIE. YOU DON'T LIKE IT, BUT JIM DOES AND-- WELL--I THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T MIND-- JUST THIS ONCE.



"Just this once!" The words rang in my ears, and the pie I didn't like suddenly became the proverbial straw. My anger and hurt and resentment could no longer be contained...

OH, AUNT LOU! IS EVERYTHING GOING TO BE LIKE THIS NOW THAT JIM TAYLOR IS AROUND? WHY MUST IT BE HIS WAY? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU AND ME AND THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE? IT'S HIS FAULT! I HATE HIM. I HATE HIM.



NEGRO ROMANCE

I ran crying from the kitchen, and refused to come down to dinner. Aunt Lou refrained from mentioning the scene afterwards and for the next few days she didn't see Jim Taylor. I had just begun to feel that things might be all right again, when...

OOPS! SORRY, WE DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE WAS AT HOME.

WE -- THAT IS -- I HAD NO IDEA YOU YOUNG FOLKS WOULD BE COMING IN SO EARLY.

SAY, WERE JUST ABOUT TO GO OUT TO THE KITCHEN AND HAVE SOME COFFEE AND A SNACK. HOW ABOUT JOINING US?

I COULD DO WITH A CUP OF COFFEE MYSELF

I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND IF I DON'T JOIN YOU, BUT I HAVE TO BE UP EARLY TOMORROW.



NEGRO ROMANCE

I kept pretty much to myself after that, knowing how unhappy I was making Aunt Lou.

I kept hoping that my sullen attitude would make her give Jim Taylor his walking papers. However, it didn't work out that way...

Then, one evening when I was sulking in my room, waiting for them to go out...

WHY DIDN'T I GO OUT WITH RAY TONIGHT? I'M NOT BOTHERING THEM BY STAYING UP HERE ALONE.



I'LL CALL HIM AND TELL HIM TO COME AFTER ME. IF I SPEND ANOTHER NIGHT HERE ALONE, I'LL GO MAD!



But as I picked up the extension to make my call, I heard Jim Taylor talking to a woman on the downstairs phone. I started to replace the receiver, and then, somehow, before I knew what I was doing, I had cupped my hand over the mouthpiece and was listening to their conversation...

... SO I THOUGHT PERHAPS YOU MIGHT TAKE ME TO DINNER TOMORROW EVENING AND WE COULD DISCUSS THE DETAILS.

THAT WILL BE FINE. HOW ABOUT THE MILL POND INN -- SAY AT SEVEN?



THE MILL POND INN AT SEVEN TOMORROW NIGHT -- AND HE'S GOING TO BE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN! I WONDER HOW AUNT LOU WOULD FEEL -- WELL -- WE'LL SEE!



The next day, I was happier than I had been in weeks -- and pleasanter with Aunt Lou. That night, when Ray called for me...

NOW, YOU TWO RUN ALONG AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'VE BEEN LEADING TOO GAY A LIFE FOR AN OLD LADY LATELY, ANYWAY.

COME ON, AUNT LOU -- WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOU! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE THREE OF US HAVE HAD A REALLY SWANK EVENING.

YES -- WE'LL GO TO THE MILL POND INN! PLEASE, AUNT LOU!



WELL, IF YOU CHILDREN INSIST -- AND I SUPPOSE I DO HAVE TO HAVE DINNER SOMEWHERE ANYWAY!

I BET IT'LL BE EVEN MORE FUN THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE!





We had been seated in the restaurant for a few minutes before I managed to spot Jim Taylor and his friend. I tried to make my surprise seem genuine, and even to act as if I were trying to keep Aunt Lou from noticing them...

WHY, ISN'T THAT--
OOHHH!

ISN'T IT WHO?

But I stared long enough to make sure Aunt Lou's gaze followed the direction of my eyes...

WHY, IT'S JIM--AND--
AND A VERY ATTRACTIVE WOMAN!



I'M-- I'M SORRY, AUNT LOU. I DIDN'T MEAN TO --

WHY SHOULD YOU BE SORRY, DEAR? AFTER ALL, JIM CAN TAKE OUT ANYONE HE CHOOSES, BUT ISN'T IT A COINCIDENCE THAT WE SHOULD COME HERE, TOO?

Jim Taylor left shortly after that, seemingly without noticing us, and Aunt Lou persuaded us to take her home early, pleading a headache. After she had gone upstairs...

MARJORIE-- YOU DIDN'T PLAN THAT LITTLE SCENE TONIGHT, BY ANY CHANCE? YOU DIDN'T KNOW JIM TAYLOR WOULD BE THERE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN?

RAY, YOU DON'T THINK-- OH, HOW COULD YOU? AND BESIDES, HOW COULD I HAVE KNOWN THEY WOULD BE THERE, TOO?



I DON'T KNOW -- I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD HAVE. MARJORIE, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I COULDN'T BEAR TO THINK OF YOUR BEING MALICIOUS AND SMALL ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT!

THEN DON'T THINK OF IT, DARLING. JUST THINK HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU.



NEGRO ROMANCE

I had succeeded in allaying Ray's suspicions, but I discovered later that this was the only success I had had. For, without knowing we had seen him, and without questioning by Aunt Lou, Jim Taylor had told her about his business appointment at the Inn that night and cleared the matter up. Not long afterward...

MARJORIE -- JIM WILL BE HERE IN A FEW MINUTES. AND BEFORE HE COMES, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

YES, AUNT LOU ... WHAT IS IT?



JIM EXPECTS HIS BUSINESS HERE TO BE FINISHED SHORTLY, MARJORIE. I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT HIM, BUT HE'S ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM -- AND I WANT TO -- VERY MUCH!

MARRY HIM! BUT THAT MEANS YOU'D MOVE AWAY! I'D BE LEFT HERE ALONE. WHAT ABOUT ME?



WE'D BOTH BE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU COME WITH US, MARJORIE -- AND WE THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS IT WOULDN'T BE TOO LONG, ANYWAY, UNTIL YOU AND RAY --

COME WITH YOU -- WHEN YOU KNOW I HATE HIM? AUNT LOU, HOW COULD YOU?



I DON'T KNOW, MARJORIE. I JUST DON'T KNOW! I'VE THOUGHT AND THOUGHT ABOUT IT. ALL I KNOW IS THAT I LOVE JIM -- AND HE LOVES ME.

LOVES YOU! HOW DO YOU KNOW HE DOES? AFTER ALL, YOU'RE FORTY-ONE YEARS OLD, AND MOST MEN HIS AGE ARE CHASING GIRLS IN THEIR TWENTIES. MAYBE YOU'RE

JUST A CONVENIENCE TO HIM -- SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF HIS HOME WHILE HE DOES AS HE PLEASES!



HELLO -- AM I INTERRUPTING SOMETHING?

OH HH -- JIM.

YOU DID THAT A LONG TIME AGO.

Now that it looked as if Jim Taylor were about to win, I no longer cared whether my hatred for him remained hidden from him or not. And I made no attempt to conceal the tide of resentment that wanted so to destroy him in that moment.

HERE, HERE, WHAT'S THIS -- TEARS --

IT MIGHT BE WELL TO THINK OVER WHAT I SAID, AUNT LOU, BEFORE YOU MAKE A COMPLETE FOOL OF YOURSELF!



NEGRO ROMANCE

When they had gone, I came back downstairs, my anger burned out and loneliness replacing it. I wanted to run to Ray for comfort, but I didn't dare. As I wandered through the house, my eyes lit on a piece of yellow paper which lay on the hallway floor...



But Ray's reaction to the telegram I had found was not what I had hoped for. I had thought that he would surely agree with me that Jim Taylor was simply trying to make a fool of Aunt Lou, and get her money for himself and another woman.



NEGRO ROMANCE



But -- later that night, when Aunt Lou came in to talk to me before going to bed...

MARJORIE, JIM AND I HAVE DECIDED TO BE MARRIED NEXT WEEK.

NEXT WEEK! BUT YOU CAN'T -- YOU CAN'T MARRY HIM AT ALL. OH, AUNT LOU, HE DOESN'T LOVE YOU. HE'S IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE NAMED MARION -- THEY ONLY WANT YOUR MONEY. I CAN PROVE IT!



YOU CAN READ IT FOR YOURSELF. I FOUND THIS ON THE FLOOR TONIGHT AFTER YOU'D GONE. NOW YOU CAN SEE WHY HE WANTS TO MARRY YOU SO QUICKLY.

I -- I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! --

But she finally did believe it, due to my hounding and her loss of another explanation of the wire.

I heard part of the scene, the next night, which ended in Jim Taylor's storming out of the house, saying that he couldn't marry a woman governed by her selfish niece...



OH, MARJORIE -- HE'S GONE. AND I LOVED HIM SO MUCH!

IT'S -- IT'S BETTER THIS WAY. HE WOULD ONLY HAVE CAUSED YOU MORE UNHAPPINESS LATER.



Two nights later, when Ray returned from Perryville...

WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE. AFTER ALL, THREE DAYS IS A LONG TIME TO BE AWAY FROM --

AND WHY IS YOUR ARDENT SUITOR, MR. TAYLOR, MISSING TONIGHT?

RAY!



I WON'T BE SEEING HIM AGAIN, RAY!

YOU WON'T BE -- WAIT A MINUTE! DID MARJORIE SHOW YOU THAT TELEGRAM? IS THAT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT?

I HAD TO --!



RAY, MARJORIE WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP!

SO THAT'S IT! THAT TELEGRAM WAS FROM JIM TAYLOR'S BROTHER, MARION! JIM WAS TRYING TO GET HIM A LOAN FROM THE BANK TO GO INTO BUSINESS HERE -- AND NOT BE DEPENDENT ON JIM.



OH, RAY -- I DIDN'T KNOW! I DIDN'T MEAN TO --

NO, YOU NEVER MEAN ANY OF THE SELFISH, VICIOUS, SMALL THINGS YOU DO -- BUT YOU DO THEM! AND I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME I REALIZED THAT YOU'RE NOT THE KIND OF PERSON I WANT FOR MY WIFE.

NEGRO ROMANCE

Ray didn't wait for excuses or pleadings -- he just walked out -- and I knew it was the end. The earlier pangs of remorse over Aunt Lou's unhappiness were nothing compared to what I felt that sleepless night, fully aware of my tragic loss...



OH, RAY, RAY -- I'LL NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN. YOU HATE ME NOW. BUT PERHAPS I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT AUNT LOU AND JIM.



I went to Perryville to see Jim...
MARJORIE --! I'VE COME TO BEG YOU TO LET ME TALK TO YOU, MR. TAYLOR -- ABOUT YOU AND AUNT LOU -- THE REAL REASON SHE SENT YOU AWAY. PLEASE LET ME COME IN.



Presently...
... SO, IT WAS ALL MY FAULT -- ABOUT THE TELEGRAM -- BUT SHE LOVES YOU -- AND IS SO MISERABLE WITHOUT YOU!
I SEE. WELL, PERHAPS WE CAN SET IT RIGHT NOW. I LOVE HER VERY MUCH, TOO.

I left Jim Taylor, knowing he and Aunt Lou would be back together soon. When I returned home, I packed my things and moved to a hotel downtown. Then...



RAY -- RAY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I KNOCKED, BUT YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME. I -- I'VE COME TO TAKE YOU HOME.



HOME? BUT THEY DON'T WANT ME -- EVEN YOU --
YES, THEY DO WANT YOU -- JUST AS I DO, DARLING! THEY -- AND I -- KNOW YOU'VE LEARNED YOUR LESSON AND TRIED TO MAKE AMENDS.



OH, RAY -- YOU MEAN YOU CAN FORGIVE EVEN MY SELFISHNESS AND WHAT IT HAS DONE?
NO, DEAREST, NOT FORGIVE -- THERE'S NO LONGER ANYTHING TO FORGIVE. THE SELFISHNESS IS GONE FROM YOU -- YOU PROVED THAT WHEN YOU WENT TO JIM AND TOLD HIM THE TRUTH.



OH, RAY, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.
AND I LOVE YOU.

And I knew at last that what Ray said was true. My selfishness was gone -- but not before it had almost cost me all the finest things in my life. I can only say a prayer of gratitude that I learned my lesson in time.

A TRAGIC VOW



For Janet there were two kinds of Love. One was a wondrous dream she had yet to realize; the other the faithful, unrequited love she knew from Harry. Was it hers to decide that the latter should be held until she was ready to discard it? So she thought, but Janet found that love was not doffed at convenience!



NEGRO ROMANCE

I CLOSED THE DOOR QUICKLY. I WANTED TO BE ALONE--TO UNDERSTAND THIS SUDDEN TURN OF EVENTS. THROUGH ALL THE YEARS OF GROWING UP, DESPITE NEW FRIENDS AND EXPERIENCES--HARRY HAD ALWAYS REMAINED BESIDE ME. I HAD TAKEN HIS PRESENCE FOR GRANTED--AS ONE MIGHT THE FAMILIAR LANDSCAPE OF HIS OWN TOWN. NOW I WONDERED ABOUT THAT.....

ALL MY SCHOOL GIRL MOMENTOS--ALL FROM HARRY. THOSE BOOKS HE USED TO CARRY FOR ME, THE TICKETS FROM MY FIRST PROM--HARRY TOOK ME TO IT, AND TONIGHT, HIS GRADUATION PROGRAM. BUT I NEVER REALIZED HE WAS IN LOVE WITH ME! OR PERHAPS, I NEVER WANTED TO FACE THE IDEA THAT HE WAS!



I'VE NEVER BEEN IN LOVE WITH HIM... I DON'T THINK I EVER COULD BE. HE'LL EXPECT A DIRECT ANSWER... AND IF I TELL HIM THAT... HE'LL PROBABLY LEAVE ME. IT'S NOT REALLY SO LARGE A TOWN, AND SO MANY OF THE BOYS ARE ALREADY MARRIED. I'D BETTER JUST KEEP HIM AROUND UNTIL--WELL, UNTIL SOMEONE ELSE COMES ALONG.



THE NEXT DAY WHEN I SAW HARRY, I GREETED HIM WITH A WARMTH I DID NOT FEEL, BUT WAS CALCULATED TO KEEP HIM INTERESTED.....

HELLO, HARRY, I'VE MISSED YOU SINCE LAST NIGHT. JANET, I DIDN'T SLEEP A WINK... GRADUATION AND YOU WERE TOO EXCITING FOR SLEEP.



THAT NIGHT, WE WENT DANCING, BUT IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER TIMES WE HAD DANCED TOGETHER. HARRY'S CHEEK BURNED CLOSE TO MINE AND HE WAS FAR MORE SERIOUS THAN USUAL.....

I-I THINK I'D LIKE TO REST NOW, HARRY... I'M A LITTLE TIRED.

IT'S JUST AS WELL, BECAUSE I WAS ABOUT TO ASK YOU OUT TO THE BALCONY. THERE'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT!



SINCE LAST NIGHT, JANET, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO ASK YOU ONE QUESTION. YOUR "YES" WILL MAKE ME HAPPIER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

MARRY--?



JANET, WE HAVEN'T JUST MET. ALL OUR LIVES WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER AND ALL MY LIFE I'VE KNOWN TWO THINGS--SOMEDAY I'D BE A DOCTOR AND SOMEDAY YOU'D BE MY WIFE! ALL ALONG YOU'VE SEEMED SO CLOSE TO ME. WAS I WRONG TO ASSUME YOU CARED, JANET?

I-I DO CARE FOR YOU, HARRY, VERY MUCH. BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS JUST YET. I JUST WANT A LITTLE TIME BEFORE I ANSWER.



"HOW LONG IS A LITTLE TIME?" HARRY ASKED ME, BUT MY HEART COULDN'T SAY. I KNEW I DIDN'T LOVE HARRY, BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE HIM....



PROMISE YOU'LL GIVE ME YOUR ANSWER SOON, JANET.

YES, HARRY, SOON...



NEGRO ROMANCE

HARRY INVITED ME OUT EVEN MORE OFTEN AFTER THAT. EACH TIME OUR EYES MET I COULD SEE IN HARRY'S A QUESTIONING, HOPEFUL LOOK. WHEN WE SAW YOUNG MARRIED FRIENDS OF OURS, A TENSE ANXIETY GRIPPED MY HEART. I KNEW WHAT HARRY WAS THINKING.....

HELLO, HELEN---
PAUL. YOU LOOK
WONDERFUL.

THAT'S WHAT MARRIAGE
DOES FOR YOU!

YOU TWO LOOK AS CLOSE
TOGETHER AS WE DID BEFORE
MARGE SAID "YES". MARRIED
LIFE'S FINE, EVEN IF WE DON'T
HAVE AN APARTMENT AND
HAVE TO CAMP WITH OUR
IN-LAWS!

SOMETHING'S BOUND
TO BE AVAILABLE SOON
AND TILL THEN, AT
LEAST, WE'RE CLOSE
TO EACH OTHER. COME
ON, THE WAITER'S FOUND
AN EMPTY TABLE. MAYBE
AN APARTMENT WILL
TURN UP NEXT.

THEY ARE HAPPY, JANET.
I KNOW WE COULD BE, TOO.
YOU SAID YOU'D ANSWER
SOON--IT'S BEEN WEEKS
SINCE I PROPOSED.
WILL YOU SAY
YES NOW?

BUT, HARRY, YOU
KNOW HOW HARD
IT IS FINDING AN
APARTMENT. AND IT
WOULD BE EVEN
HARDER IN OUR CASE--
YOU NEED AN OFFICE,
TOO.

I GRASPED AT ANY STRAW TO DELAY A DEFINITE
ANSWER, ALTHOUGH THIS LATEST EVASION VIRTUALLY
TOOK AN AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER FOR GRANTED. AFTER
THAT, HARRY MORE STRONGLY BEGAN MAKING PLANS....

HOP IN, JANET. I'M TAKING YOU
FOR A RIDE WITH A SURPRISE
ENDING.

IT SOUNDS MYSTER-
IOUS! BUT LET'S GO--
IT INTRIGUES ME!

BUT HARRY PULLED UP IN FRONT OF A NEW
BUILDING, AND WHEN I SAW THE SIGN
OUTSIDE MY HEART FROZE.....

THAT'S THE SURPRISE!
COME ON, LET'S HAVE
A LOOK--IT MIGHT BE
OUR NEW ADDRESS!
I TOLD THE MANAGER
I'D BRING YOU DOWN
TODAY!

AN APARTMENT
HOUSE...?

PROFESSIONAL
APARTMENT
AVAILABLE
IDEAL OFFICE AND
HOME FOR A DOCTOR

ABOUT WHEN DO YOU
THINK YOU'LL BE READY
TO MOVE IN,
MISS THOMPSON?

ER...I REALLY COULDN'T
SAY JUST YET. YOU
SEE, WE HAVEN'T
SET A DEFINITE DATE
FOR OUR WEDDING!
WE'LL LET YOU KNOW
AS SOON AS WE
DO.

NEGRO ROMANCE



I SEARCHED DESPERATELY FOR ANOTHER PRETEXT FOR DELAY. I DISCOVERED IT THAT VERY NIGHT. I HAD KNOWN HARRY'S MOTHER FOR A LONG TIME. BUT NOW I FOUND MYSELF BEING INVITED TO DINNER THERE MORE OFTEN, AND EACH TIME SHE WOULD SMILE AT ME KNOWINGLY.....



WHEN HARRY PARKED ON THE HILL ABOVE TOWN, I KNEW WHAT WAS TO FOLLOW. BUT THIS TIME I WAS WELL PREPARED WITH A VERY LOGICAL DEFENSE....



NEGRO ROMANCE

HARRY SEEMED UPSET, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT FOR HIM TO SAY. WITH A DEEP SIGH OF RELIEF, I DISMISSED THE ENTIRE MATTER FROM MY MIND IN THE WEEKS TO FOLLOW. THEN ONE DAY, WHILE I WAS WAITING AT THE HOSPITAL FOR HARRY, A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN SMILED CHARMINGLY IN A WAY THAT SET MY PULSES POUNDING.....



YOU CAN'T BE A PATIENT! YOU LOOK BEAUTIFULLY HEALTHY TO ME! ANYTHING I CAN DO?

NO, THANKS. I-I'M JUST WAITING FOR ONE OF THE INTERNS!

HARRY CAME OUT A MOMENT LATER AND WE WALKED OFF, BUT THE IMAGE OF THE HANDSOME STRANGER LINGERED STILL. THEN, ABRUPTLY, I FOUND MYSELF DEEPER IN THE WEB OF MY OWN WEAVING.....

JANET, THIS JEWELRY STORE IS STILL OPEN. LET'S FIND OUT YOUR RING SIZE WHILE WE'RE HERE!

BUT, HARRY-- WE DECIDED NOT TO DISCUSS THIS UNTIL YOU WERE THROUGH INTERNING!



JANET, I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU. I DON'T WANT TO GO ON WAITING FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER! WHY COULDN'T WE START MAKING PLANS NOW?

BUT HARRY, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. YOU CAN'T MAKE PLANS TILL YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'LL BE PRACTICING MEDICINE. I'M AS EAGER AS YOU ARE, BUT WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT TILL YOU ARE FINISHED INTERNING!



AFTER HE'D FINISHED INTERNING... THAT WAS MY ARMOR! I TOOK ASSURED REFUGE IN THAT PHRASE. ONE DAY, AS I WAITED FOR HARRY AT THE HOSPITAL....

OH, HELLO! WAITING AGAIN?

YES, BUT THIS TIME HE'S A HALF HOUR LATE. HE'S PROBABLY STUCK IN THE LABORATORY!



WE'VE MET IN THE HOSPITAL CORRIDOR OFTEN ENOUGH FOR ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF, I THINK. I'M TOM HARRIS, THE DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT. AND IF YOUR PLANS ARE UPSET, I'D LIKE VERY MUCH TO TAKE YOU TO DINNER.

OH, I'VE HEARD YOUR NAME MENTIONED OFTEN. I'M JANET THOMPSON. I'D LIKE TO ACCEPT YOUR INVITATION. I KNOW MY FRIEND WOULD BE GLAD NOT TO HAVE TO RUSH AWAY FROM HIS WORK!



AND SO I LEFT A NOTE FOR HARRY... AND WENT OUT WITH TOM. NO, I NEVER REGRETTED THAT DECISION. BEING WITH TOM WAS SO WONDERFULLY DIFFERENT. IT WAS EXCITING AND THRILLING. THE VERY AIR HINTED OF THAT LOVE I HAD SO LONG YEARNED FOR. AND WHEN THE EVENING WAS OVER....

JANET, IT'S BEEN GRAND. I'D LIKE AN ENCORE. THAT IS, IF I WOULDN'T BE STEPPING ON YOUR FRIEND'S TOES.

HARRY? WHY, OF COURSE NOT, HE'S JUST A CHILDHOOD ACQUAINTANCE-- ALMOST A BROTHER. WHY NOT CALL ME TOMORROW?



NEGRO ROMANCE

MY HEART SANG HAPPILY AT TOM'S INVITATION BUT HARRY WAS WAITING FOR ME WITH HURT, ACCUSING EYES. EXCUSES RUSHED TO MY LIPS.....

HARRY! DIDN'T YOU GET MY NOTE? I LEFT IT AT THE HOSPITAL!

YOUR MOTHER SUGGESTED I WAIT FOR YOU, JANET! I WASN'T AT THE HOSPITAL! AND I WON'T BE THERE AGAIN!

HARRY... WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I MEAN WE WON'T HAVE TO WAIT ANY LONGER. I'VE QUIT INTERNING -- SO WE CAN BE MARRIED NOW!

YOU QUIT! BUT, HARRY, YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR! AND IT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S DREAM AS WELL! YOU WANT THAT MORE THAN ANYTHING! YOU CAN'T RESIGN. YOU'D NEVER BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH YOURSELF WITHOUT HAVING INTERNEED AT A GOOD HOSPITAL!

I FOUND THAT I WANT SOMETHING MORE THAN I WANT TO BE A DOCTOR--I WANT YOU FOR MY WIFE. I'LL GET A JOB NOW AND WE'LL MARRY RIGHT AWAY. JUST SAY YES, JANET.

BUT-- BUT YOU'LL RUIN YOUR REPUTATION BY QUITTING NOW. HARRY, YOUR BECOMING A DOCTOR IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY ANSWER.

IT ISN'T TO ME, JANET. I'VE QUIT-- I'M THROUGH WITH MEDICINE. I WANT TO MARRY YOU RIGHT AWAY. THAT'S WHY I DID IT, JANET-- **FOR YOU**. YOU SAID YOU'D ANSWER WHEN I FINISHED INTERNING. LET'S **SET THE DATE** NOW, JANET.

THE DATE--? OH YES, BUT I'D BETTER DISCUSS THAT WITH MY FOLKS FIRST! YOU UNDERSTAND...

I GUESS I OUGHT TO GO IN WITH YOU. IT'D BE MORE PROPER IF WE EXPLAINED IT TOGETHER.

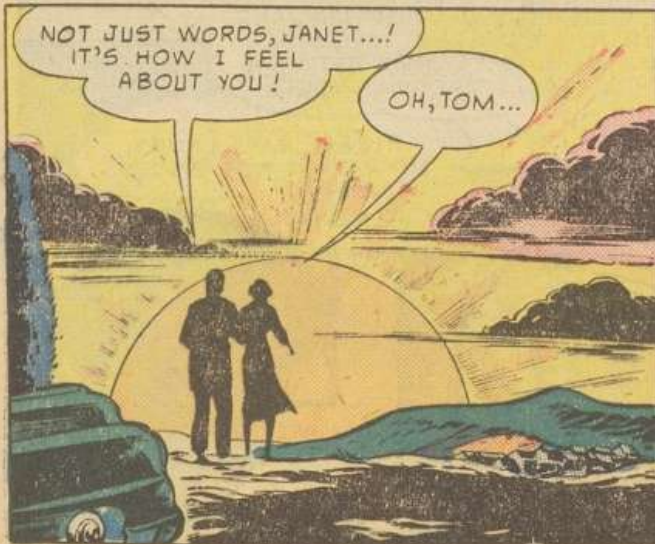
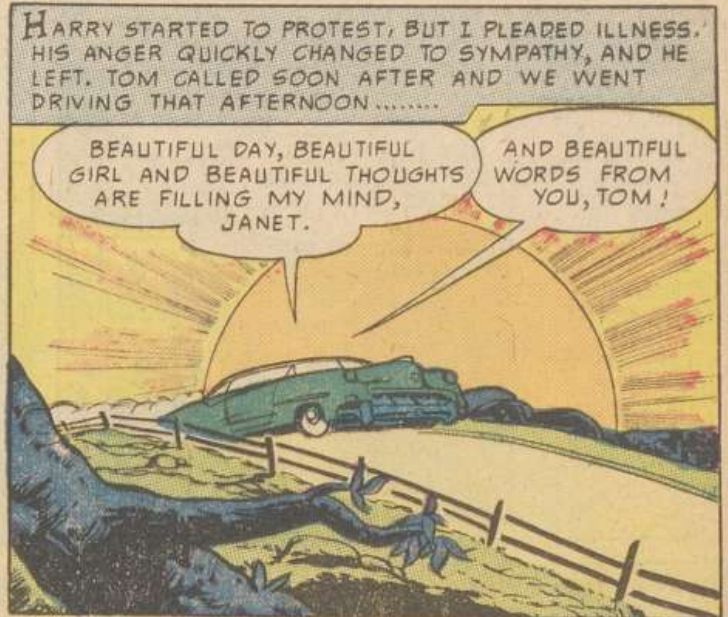
I-I THINK IT'S WISE THAT I TALK TO THEM FIRST... ALONE. I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW, HARRY.

TRAPPED! MY DODGING OF THE ISSUE HAD FORCED MY HAND. CIRCUMSTANCE HAD FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH ME. IN MY DESIRE TO DELAY HARRY, I HAD DRIVEN HIM TO QUIT HIS WORK, AND NOW I HAD NO FURTHER RETREAT. NOW, WHEN I HAD MET TOM AND LOVE SEEMED ALMOST MINE....

OH, WHY DID THIS HAVE TO HAPPEN NOW? I FEEL SURE THAT TOM WILL ASK ME SOON... BUT I MUST BE POSITIVE! WHAT IF HE DIDN'T--AND HARRY LEFT ME, TOO! I WOULD NOT LET THAT HAPPEN!

NEGRO ROMANCE

NEXT MORNING.....



SUNSET CAME ALL TOO QUICKLY WITH TOM BY MY SIDE. THE HAPPIEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE HAD COME, AND ONLY TOM EXISTED FOR ME. BUT THAT NIGHT, AS WE PARKED OUTSIDE MY HOUSE....



BUT THEN I REALIZED I HAD HEARD THE WORDS MY HEART LONGED FOR! I DIDN'T CARE IF HARRY HAD SEEN ME... I DIDN'T NEED HIM NOW! TOM LEFT, AND I STARTED UP TO THE HOUSE.....

JANET, ALL ALONG I BELIEVED YOU LOVED ME! YOU GAVE ME REASON TO FEEL THAT WAY! ALL MY PLANS... AND NOW THIS!

BUT, I... I NEVER DID ACTUALLY SAY YES TO YOU, HARRY!



ARE YOU SERIOUS? WHAT KIND OF GAME ARE YOU PLAYING? THERE'S BEEN AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN US! I GAVE UP MY CAREER BECAUSE OF YOU! I SEE NOW... YOU WERE JUST KEEPING ME AROUND... STALLING ME UNTIL SOMEONE ELSE CAME ALONG! THAT WAS ROTTEN, JANET... JUST PLAIN ROTTEN!



HARRY TURNED AWAY, BITTER, DESPONDENT. I FELT A MOMENTARY PANG OF PITY, BUT A SENSE OF TRIUMPH SOON STIFLED IT. I WAS FREE OF HARRY AND HAD TOM. THE NEXT EVENING, I EXPECTED TOM, WHEN THE DOOR BELL RANG.....

MRS. LANDS....!

I SPOKE TO HARRY WHEN HE CAME IN LAST NIGHT! IT'S THE FIRST I HEARD ABOUT HIS LEAVING THE HOSPITAL! AND I FOUND OUT OTHER THINGS!



B-BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, JANET! I ALWAYS IMAGINED YOU WERE SWEET AND SINCERE. HARRY BELIEVED YOU LOVED HIM AND PLANNED TO MARRY HIM. TELL ME, THIS IS JUST A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU CHILDREN... SOMETHING YOU'LL PATCH UP AND FORGET!

PLEASE, MRS. LANDS, I'D RATHER NOT DISCUSS IT NOW! GOOD NIGHT!



SHE TURNED TO GO, CONTEMPT FROSTING HER EVERY WORD. BUT THEN.....

JANET, YOUR SELFISHNESS WILL COME HOME TO YOU! OH... EXCUSE ME!

TOM!



I HEARD EVERY WORD SHE SAID! I DIDN'T KNOW HARRY HAD SERIOUSLY EXPECTED TO MARRY YOU BEFORE I CAME ALONG. YOU SAID HE WAS ONLY A FRIEND. I GUESS I WAS HIS REPLACEMENT, AND I'LL HAVE TO DO TILL SOMEONE BETTER COMES ALONG TO TAKE MY PLACE!

NO, TOM. NO! THAT'S NOT TRUE! I REALLY LOVE YOU!



NEGRO ROMANCE

TOM'S WORDS LASHED AT ME FURIOUSLY, BRUSHING ASIDE MY DENIALS.

THAT'S WHAT HARRY THOUGHT! AND THAT BELIEF RUINED HIS LIFE. I WON'T BE FOOLED INTO WRECKING MINE! I WANTED YOUR LOVE, JANET, BUT AFTER LEARNING WHAT HAPPENED TO HARRY HOW CAN I EVER BELIEVE IN YOU?

(SOB) YOU MUST BELIEVE IN ME, TOM! YOU MUST!



HARRY MUST HAVE BELIEVED IN YOU! A MAN DOESN'T GIVE UP HIS CAREER UNLESS HE HAS A COMPELLING REASON. HARRY THOUGHT YOUR LOVE WAS A GOOD REASON-- YOU PROVED HIM WRONG!

DON'T LEAVE ME, TOM! PLEASE...



HE'S GONE! THE ONE TIME IN MY LIFE I FOUND REAL LOVE, I LOST IT!



TIME PASSED, BUT THE ACHING WOUND OF LOST LOVE DIDN'T HEAL. AND IN THE GRIEF OF LOSING TOM I CAME TO UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAD DONE TO HARRY. I KNEW NOW WHAT IT WAS TO BE UTTERLY ALONE...

HARRY LOVED ME THE WAY I LOVED TOM, AND I LED HIM ON CRUELLY AND SELFISHLY! WHEN I WALKED OUT ON HIM HE MUST HAVE FELT THE SAME EMPTINESS I'VE KNOWN SINCE TOM LEFT ME.



I WAS TOO LATE TO HELP MYSELF. BUT I HAD TO SEE HARRY, AND IN SOME WAY MAKE UP FOR THE WRONG I HAD DONE... I COULD NOT LIVE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH A WRONG INTERRED FOREVER IN MY HEART!

JANET! I N-NEVER IMAGINED... I NEVER THOUGHT...

I MUST TALK TO YOU, HARRY!



HARRY, IT WAS WRONG AND CRUEL THE WAY I LIED AND LED YOU ON. I WAS NEVER WORTHY OF YOUR LOVE. I'VE COME TO ASK YOU TO STOP HURTING YOURSELF BECAUSE OF ME-- I'M NOT WORTH IT!



GO BACK TO THE HOSPITAL, FINISH YOUR INTERNING SO YOU CAN START TO PRACTICE MEDICINE. YOU KNOW HOW MUCH IT MEANS TO YOUR MOTHER-- HOW VERY MUCH IT WOULD HAVE MEANT TO YOUR FATHER. YOU CAN'T LET THIS IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY IN YOUR LIFE SLIP BY!



NEGRO ROMANCE

AS I LEFT, TEARS FILLED MY EYES. YET I FELT A GROWING SENSE OF PEACE AT LAST, FOR I COULD SENSE IN HARRY'S FACE A SIGN THAT HE WOULD GO BACK. AND I KNEW THEN, THAT IN SOME SMALL WAY I HAD ATONED FOR THE GREAT WRONG I HAD DONE!

I'LL... I'LL THINK ABOUT IT, JANET.



MONTHS PASSED, MONTHS OF HEAVY SADNESS AND HOPELESS LONGING FOR TOM. BUT ONE DAY AS I TURNED THE CORNER OF A STREET NEAR MY HOUSE I SAW SOMETHING THAT MADE MY HEART FEEL GLAD AGAIN.....

"HARRY LANDS, M.D." -- AND I HELPED PUT THAT SHINGLE UP THERE!



AT LEAST SOMETHING HAD BEEN SALVAGED FROM THE CHAOS OF MY LIFE. I PASSED THAT CORNER OFTEN IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED. THEN, ONE DAY.....

TOM!

JANET! I WAS JUST ON MY WAY TO SEE YOU!



T-TO SEE ME, TOM? BUT WHY?

I SAW THE SHINGLE AND WONDERED WHY HARRY DECIDED TO GO BACK AND FINISH HIS TRAINING. HE TOLD ME YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CONVINCED HIM!



IT WAS LITTLE ENOUGH I COULD DO AFTER THE WAY I'D HURT HIM!

THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE GIRL I ONCE THOUGHT YOU WERE, JANET. DO YOU STILL--?



AND THEN AGAIN I WAS IN HIS ARMS... BUT THIS TIME TO STAY. I HAD AWAKENED TO THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF LOVE, AND KNEW NOW THAT IT DEMANDED LOVING AS WELL AS BEING LOVED.....

YES, TOM. YES! WITH ALL MY HEART AND FOR ALL TIME... I LOVE YOU!

YOU'VE CHANGED, JANET. AND THE LOVE YOU PLEDGE NOW I KNOW IS REAL AND TRUE. I NO LONGER FEAR LOVING YOU, MY DARLING!





THIS TIME FOR KEEPS

By Ruth Day

HER warm red lips quivering, Helen Gillespie tore the telegram to shreds and dropped the pieces into the kitchen wastebasket. For a moment the world seemed to shudder and reel before her tear-blurred eyes, and for a moment, her hurt, confused heart pleaded with Joe, breathed a prayer for him to change his mind. But as her mother stepped curiously into the kitchen, she somehow recovered her composure. A slim, dainty figure, scarcely more than five feet two, with masses of dark lustrous hair and big brown eyes, she even managed to smile tremulously as her mother looked at the empty telegraph envelope lying upon the bread board. "From Joe, Mom. He—he seemed to have changed his mind about me again. Mom, he's taking Mona to the dance!"

A shadow passed across Mrs. Gillespie's chubby face. She had never approved of Helen's interest in Joe, but it hurt her now to see the stricken, uncomprehending glow in her daughter's eyes. She rushed over to Helen and drew her into her arms, just as she had done long ago when something had upset her. "Joe isn't the only man in the world, you know," she said softly. "Why, take Russ Carver. He'd love to date you. And if it's dancing you want tonight, I'm sure he'll make a better partner than Joe would have been."

"Russ Carver?" Her wrinkled brow showing her surprise. She remembered tall, well-built Russ Carver. She had always been too busy thinking about Joe to think about him. As her mother began to smile and nod her gray head, she gasped. "Mom, you mean—"

"And why not? A man who has been as attentive and persistent as Russ certainly deserves a chance. And it wouldn't do Joe Grimes any harm to be shown that you can

go out with other men, that other men think you are charming."

The thought drove the grief from Helen's heart and sent her flying downstairs to the telephone booth in the drug store. Not only was Russ at home, but he didn't mind being second choice. "Even if I were tenth choice, honey," he said in vibrant tones that strangely pleased her, "I'd leap at the chance to date you. Make yourself lovely, and I'll forgive the last minute telephone call."

Make herself lovely? Helen's eyes flashed as she rushed to the closet and drew out the gown she had bought especially for the Company's Annual Formal Dance. The gown represented months of constant budgeting. It was time that Joe learned she was attractive and that she could no longer be left dangling on the hook.

Her eyes sparkling with the knowledge that she was looking her best, she pirouetted gayly before Russ when he came for her in his car an hour and a half later. "Do you forgive the last minute call?" she challenged laughingly.

HE stared. "Are you sure you're the waitress at the Hord Cafeteria?" He shook his head, obviously approving the vision standing there before him in a red taffeta and net. "You—you'll be the sensation of the party."

Again, for the second time that evening, his deep vibrant tones pleased her. Her eyes sparkled as she looked at him in his beautifully fitted tuxedo. "We'll both be sensations, Russ. You look very handsome, too. We'll both be the hit of the party," and taking his arm they left.

And, magically, it all came true. There in the beautiful ballroom, which the Company

had rented for the occasion. In the rich glow streaming from chandeliers and candles, Helen had a wonderful dream come true. A beautiful dancer. Russ led her gracefully through intricate steps. Around and around he twirled her on the polished floor, smiling softly, whispering into her ear. And one by one the other couples left the floor and stood and admired the dancing couple—a vision of loveliness in a red frock and a tall smiling assured young man. "You see," whispered Russ as the music halted and a burst of applause rose from all sides of the dance floor, "you were the sensation of the party after all."

THEN, smiling, he stepped forward suddenly and took her into his arms. His brown eyes probed into hers for a moment, and then his embrace tightened about her, driving the breath from her slim body. "And the man who didn't object to being a second-choice date is entitled to his reward, isn't he?"

"Russ!" Her heart pounding, confusion milling in her brain, she made an effort to extricate herself from his tight embrace. "Russ, I—I—"

There was no need to say more. Suddenly there was a loud voice beating in her ears, and she was being pulled away from him. "My girl!" howled Joe Grimes. "Let my girl alone." And pulling her towards the small balcony, he laughed. "Can you imagine that guy trying to steal my girl?"

"Your girl!" Lips curling as hurt and bitterness welled up within her, Helen laughed wildly. "But you found another girl. You found a girl you really wanted to take to the dance. Isn't that what you said?"

He shook his head, somewhat awed by her loveliness. "How come you never looked so beautiful when you were with me? How come—aw, forget it, honey. Mona knows a guy who can give me a much better job than I have with the cafeteria. Naturally I had to play up to her. I thought—"

But suddenly it was no longer important to

Helen to know what he had thought. She remembered the bitter moments Joe had often given her, and the thought of the bitter moment he was now giving Mona opened her eyes at last. "You—you would use a person that way? You would—Joe Grimes, I never want to see you again! You don't love, you just play at love. You're mean and conniving and cruel, and I despise you!"

"Helen!" he thundered as she pushed her way through the crowd. "Helen!" But her chin high, the sadness and hurt gone from her heart at last, she kept walking until she had reached the terrace door. For a moment the sudden change from the darkness of night confused her. And then a hand touched hers and guided her to the red velvet lounge, and suddenly there was no more confusion, suddenly it all wondrously made sense at last.

She shook her head. "You've been so patient, so hopeful. Yet I was never even kind to you. I—Russ, it was wonderfully kind of you to bring me here after the way I turned you down last week. I—"

"I wanted to. I love you, Helen. I wish I could spend my life helping you."

To help her. Giving, not taking. Helping, not hurting. She shook her head as tears of happiness came into her eyes. "Russ," she breathed, "now I know why Mom has always been on your side. Russ—"

"It will be wonderful," he said in his rich vibrant tones. "You'll see."

And there in the night as his lips claimed hers, she had the strange feeling that it would be wonderful, that this was the beginning of something that would be rich and fine forever. Her heart pounding madly, her blood racing through her veins, she looked at him in the moonlight and murmured. "Russ—Russ, I think it will be. Russ, I think I'm in love. Why, I know it, Russ. Russ, darling, I know it's for keeps!"

Eagerly, she raised her lips to his again . . .

THE END

TOO LATE FOR LOVE



IT'S BEAUTIFUL, ARTIE!

THERE'S NO ENGAGEMENT RING BIG ENOUGH TO CONVEY MY LOVE FOR YOU, DIANE. BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT MY LOVE WILL BE AS UNDYING AS THE BRILLIANCE OF THAT DIAMOND!

Diane longed for a love that was beyond her reach. Even in the ardent embrace of the man who pledged his love and placed a ring upon her finger she remembered the kisses of another. But there came a day when her illusions turned to dust, and her airy dreams became a nightmare of heartbreak!

BEFORE I MET ARTIE, I NEVER THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE ANOTHER TO REAWAKEN THE THWARTED EMOTION OF LOVE THAT LAY SO LONG DORMANT IN MY HEART. BUT NOW AS HIS LIPS COVERED MINE WITH A WARM AND GENTLE PRESSURE, MY WHOLE BEING CAME THRILLINGLY, VIBRANTLY TO LIFE....

GOOD NIGHT, MY DARLING--!



BUT OVER THE VIOLENT POUNDING OF MY HEART-- I THRUST ANOTHER IMAGE, AN IMAGE OF ANOTHER KISS--ANOTHER TIME--ANOTHER LOVE!

I--I'D BETTER BE GOING INSIDE NOW--



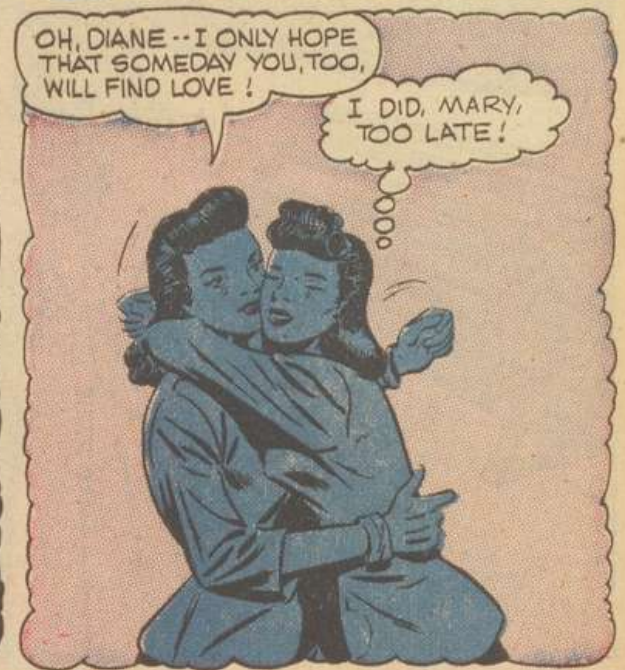
AS I WALKED UP TO MY ROOM, I FOLDED BACK THE LEAF OF MEMORY, RECALLING VIVIDLY THE KISSES OF HANDSOME, DASHING HANK KELTON. THE PASSING YEARS HAD FAILED TO DIMINISH THE EXCITING ECSTASY I STILL FELT WHEN RECALLING THAT NIGHT...



MARY AND I WERE INSEPARABLE FRIENDS--- BUT SHE HAD MET HANK FIRST.

BOTH OF US WERE COMPLETELY TAKEN BY HIS BOLD HANDSOMENESS, HIS VIRILE STRENGTH.

THOUGH I HAD MY RAPTURES MOMENTS WITH HANK--- CERTAIN THAT I WAS WINNING HIS AFFECTIONS, HE STILL CONTINUED SEEING MARY REGULARLY. AND ONE DAY---



AFTER THEIR MARRIAGE, THEY MOVED OUT OF TOWN. THERE WERE LETTERS FROM MARY AT FIRST-- BUT THEN THEY STOPPED ENTIRELY--- AND MY ONE LAST TIE WITH HANK WAS BROKEN.

FOR A LONG TIME I WAS INCONSOLABLE, UNTIL ARTIE CAME ALONG. SWEET, GENTLE, SYMPATHETIC ARTIE! HE SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND AND I SLOWLY RESPONDED TO HIS LOVE--



NEGRO ROMANCE



PLEASE COME AT ONCE, DIANE--- I NEED YOU SO BADLY... THE ONE FRIEND I CAN TRUST IN ALL THE WORLD!

IT WAS THE FIRST I'D HEARD FROM MARY IN MORE THAN A YEAR.

I KNEW THAT I COULDN'T REFUSE HER APPEAL. BUT I HAD ANOTHER REASON FOR MY IMMEDIATE RESPONSE.

IT WOULD BE MY CHANCE TO SEE HANK AGAIN!



HANK---AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, I---I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN, TOO! JUST TO SEE YOU, BE NEAR YOU. NO MATTER HOW BRIEFLY!



ARTIE WAS HIS USUAL UNDERSTANDING SELF ABOUT MY NEED TO LEAVE TOWN---

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, HONEY--YOU'RE GOING TO BE A LONG WAY FROM HOME. AND IF YOU NEED ME FOR ANYTHING AT ALL---JUST WHISTLE--AIRMAIL! AND DON'T FORGET TO WRITE!

I'LL WRITE EVERY DAY!



I HAVE TO GO NOW, DEAR. SEE YOU SOON.

THE SOONER THE BETTER, DARLING!

MY BREATH CAME FASTER AS I ENVISIONED MY MEETING WITH HANK AGAIN.

AT LAST, I ARRIVED AT MARY'S PLACE. I WAS SHOCKED AT THE SQUALOR. AND THEN I SAW A SMALL CHILD PLAYING BY HERSELF..



HELLO, DARLING! YOU MUST BE LITTLE GINNY. YOU LOOK LIKE YOUR MOTHER. I--I'M DIANE.

MOMMY SICK!



YOU MUST BE THE YOUNG LADY MRS. KELTON HAS BEEN WAITING FOR. I'M DR. SPENCER. WILL YOU GO RIGHT IN? I'M AFRAID THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME.

NOT--MUCH--TIME? I DON'T--UNDERSTAND--!

I WAS STRUCK BY THE FULL IMPLICATION OF THE DOCTOR'S REMARK AS I ENTERED MARY'S ROOM. SHE WAS ONLY A WAN, FEEBLE, GASPING SPECTRE OF HER FORMER SELF. AN AGONY OF TWISTING HURT CLUTCHED AT MY HEART---



THANK--THANKS FOR COMING--DIANE. YOU'RE MY LAST HOPE, BABY--- LITTLE GINNY--! I-- I WANT YOU TO TAKE CARE OF HER.

SOB...DON'T SAY THAT, MARY, YOU MUST GET WELL! AND THE CHILD STILL HAS HANK...!



HANK--HE..

I'M AFRAID THAT'S ENOUGH FOR RIGHT NOW. SHE PASSED OUT AGAIN FROM THE EXCITEMENT OF SEEING YOU. WILL YOU WAIT OUTSIDE, PLEASE? I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN, SOON.

BUT I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO MARY AGAIN. LATE THAT NIGHT SHE PASSED AWAY WITHOUT EVER REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS....

...SOB... POOR MARY. I--I HAD NO IDEA SHE WAS SO ILL. WHY DIDN'T SHE WRITE? AND WHY DIDN'T HANK CONTACT ME? WHERE IS HANK--?



THE DOCTOR LEFT AND I PUT GINNY TO SLEEP WHEN I HEARD THE SKIDDING OF AUTO TIRES JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR. IT WAS FLUNG OPEN AND HANK ENTERED--



HELLO, HANK.

DIANE! YOU? WHAT---WHAT HAPPENED?



WHERE--WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? MARY IS---IS---

WHAT?? I-- I WAS OUT TRYING TO GET SOME BIG DOCTOR FOR HER. A SPECIALIST!



POOR MARY I---I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A CHANCE TO SAY GOODBYE --TO HER--!

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO FOR MARY NOW. IT'S POOR HANK WHO NEEDS MY SYMPATHY.



I-- I KNOW HOW YOU MUST FEEL, HANK. CAN--CAN I DO ANYTHING?

NEGRO ROMANCE

I PUT MY ARM AROUND HANK TO COMFORT HIM --AND THEN-- HE DREW ME CLOSE.

I TOLD MYSELF IT WAS ONLY HIS NEED TO BE COMFORTED. BUT IT WAS NOT CONSOLATION THAT STIRRED MY HEART AND HASTENED MY PULSE BEAT.

DIANE, I NEED YOU SO MUCH NOW!

AND I'LL BE HERE BESIDE YOU, HANK--- MARY WANTED ME TO HELP!



AND SO I TOOK A ROOM IN THE SAME HOUSE. TAKING CARE OF GINNY MEANT A LOT TO ME --ALMOST AS IF SHE WERE MY OWN. AND, OF COURSE, THERE WAS ALWAYS HANK. SO THE DAYS AND THE WEEKS PASSED...

HI-- HOW GOES THE GUARDIAN ANGEL?

WE'RE DOING FINE. AS SOON AS I FINISH FEEDING GINNY, I'LL GET DINNER GOING.



NEVER MIND DINNER, DIANE. WE'LL EAT OUT TONIGHT. YOU'VE HAD TOUGH GOING LATELY--AND A CHANGE WILL DO YOU GOOD.

B-BUT, GINNY. WE CAN'T LEAVE HER.

WE CAN LEAVE HER WITH OUR LANDLADY. OLD SIMMONS IS CRAZY ABOUT HER.

IF YOU THINK IT'S ALL RIGHT, HANK!



I WAS DUBIOUS ABOUT LEAVING THE CHILD. BUT THE THRILL OF AN EVENING OUT WITH HANK DWARFED ALL MY FEARS-- BUT ONE.

AS I DRESSED TO GO OUT, THE THOUGHT THAT I HAD BEEN DELINQUENT IN WRITING ARTIE, PERSISTENTLY TROUBLED ME---

OH, I GUESS THERE'LL BE TIME ENOUGH FOR ARTIE WHEN HANK'S STRAIGHTENED OUT.

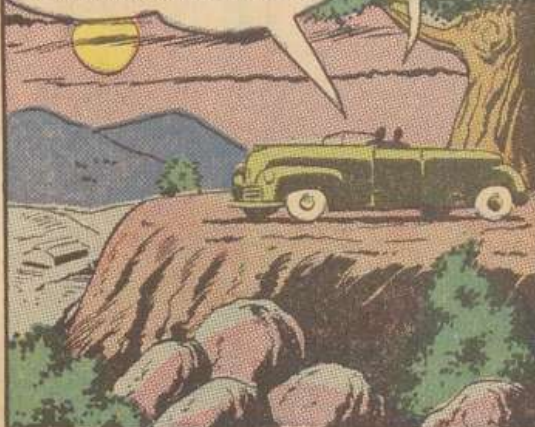


I KNEW THAT A LETTER WOULD PROBABLY BRING ARTIE RUNNING WITH A WILLINGNESS TO AID ME---- AND THAT WAS NOT PART OF MY PLANS!

I WANTED HANK ALONE! OUR EVENING WAS AN INTERLUDE IN PARADISE!

DIANE---THERE'S NO POINT IN HOLDING BACK ANY LONGER. YOU KNOW THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU! IT'S ALWAYS BEEN YOU! I MARRIED MARY BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO BREAK A PROMISE!

HANK-- IT SEEMS SO SOON AFTER MARY...



NOTHING MATTERS NOW BUT YOU AND ME! WE WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE TWICE!

OH, HANK--!



HANK TOOK ME OUT OFTEN AFTER THAT --- ALWAYS LEAVING LITTLE GINNY WITH THE LANDLADY.

HANK WAS MINE NOW AND MY HEART EXALTED --- BUT THE EXALTATION WAS NOT DESTINED TO BE LONG-LIVED. ONE EVENING WHEN WE RETURNED FROM A DATE ---



STOP THAT WHIMPERING! STOP IT, DO YOU HEAR ME? MARY MADE A SPOILED BRAT OUT OF HER!

..SOB.. ..SOB..



AN ANGRY PROTEST TREMBLED ON MY LIPS AND MY HEART WENT OUT TO THE FRIGHTENED CHILDO.

BUT THEN I DECIDED THAT HANK WAS UNDER A SEVERE STRAIN AND PERHAPS THE CHILD DID NEED DISCIPLINE ---

COME ON, GINNY! FROM NOW ON SHE'S GOING TO LEARN TIME FOR BED. THAT SHE CAN'T HAVE THINGS HER OWN WAY.



WITH EACH PASSING DAY, I PUSHED AWAY THE DISTURBING THOUGHT OF MY NEGLECT OF ARTIE. BUT ONE DAY, IT COULD NO LONGER BE DISMISSED. THE DOORBELL RANG AND ---



I TRIED HARD TO KEEP THE ANNOYANCE OUT OF MY VOICE AS I QUICKLY EXPLAINED ABOUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED. ONLY HIS LOVING CONCERN FOR ME BLINDED HIM TO THE FACT THAT HE WASN'T WELCOME ..

GINNY AND HANK NEED ME. THINGS HAVE BEEN SO HECTIC, I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO WRITE. I UNDERSTAND, DARLING. BUT I'LL HANG AROUND UNTIL YOU'RE READY TO GO. I'VE THIS VACATION COMING TO ME, ANYWAY. I CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER WAY TO SPEND IT THAN HELPING YOU.



NEGRO ROMANCE

IN SPITE OF MY PROTESTS, ARTIE REMAINED IN TOWN. HE CAME TO THE HOUSE OFTEN, ALWAYS FINDING HANK AND ME OUT TOGETHER. BEFORE LONG, HE UNDERSTOOD ALL TOO WELL THE STRANGE STATE OF AFFAIRS--

DIANE, DO YOU THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING, SPENDING ALL THAT TIME WITH HIM? I CAN UNDERSTAND TAKING CARE OF THE CHILD... BUT HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOU CERTAINLY ISN'T THAT OF AN AGGRIEVED WIDOWER SEEKING SOLACE!

YOU HAVE NO RIGHT INTIMATING ANYTHING LIKE THAT! I WON'T HEAR OF IT!



I WANTED TO TELL ARTIE ALL WAS OVER. YET EACH TIME HE LOOKED AT ME WITH LOVE AND TRUST, SO EVIDENT IN HIS FINELY SENSITIVE FACE, I COULDN'T FIND THE WORDS---

WHAT IS IT, DIANE? TROUBLE WITH THE BOY FRIEND AGAIN? WHY DON'T YOU TELL HIM TO GO HOME? WE DO NICELY WITHOUT HIM!

I WILL, HANK. BUT I DON'T WANT TO HURT HIM AND I WANT TO BE SURE---



I'LL HELP YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND!

PLEASE, HANK-- YOU'RE HURTING ME!



HANK'S KISS WAS DEMANDING ---ALMOST BRUTAL---AND FOR THE FIRST TIME I FELT REPELLED BY IT.

IT WAS A FAR CRY FROM ARTIE'S GENTLE CARESS. THEN, AS IF FATE CONSPIRED TO CONFRONT ME WITH A MIRROR OF MY ACTIONS, THE DOOR SUDDENLY OPENED....

ARTIE!

DOES THAT SORT OF STUFF COME UNDER THE HEADING OF SYMPATHY, TOO!? AND I CAME UP HERE TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU, DIANE!



I MUST TALK TO YOU, ARTIE--- I MUST EXPLAIN A LOT OF THINGS I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND!

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE! BUT THE BLINDERS ARE OFF, DIANE! YOU'RE NOT HERE BECAUSE OF THE CHILD! IT'S HIM! WELL--TAKE HIM! I'M THROUGH!

NO, ARTIE--NO COME BACK! I--I--!

LET HIM GO!



IT'S CLEAR SAILING AHEAD FOR BOTH OF US NOW, DIANE. THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION! COME ON---YOU NEED SOME LAUGHS. GET READY AND I'LL BRING GINNY NEXT DOOR IN THE MEANWHILE!



NEGRO ROMANCE

ARTIE HAD GONE. THAT WAS WHAT I HAD WANTED. YET, WHY WAS MY HEART HEAVY WITHIN ME? HANK INSISTED UPON GOING TO A NIGHT CLUB TO CELEBRATE, BUT THERE WAS NO REJOICING IN ME. WOODENLY, I STUMBLED THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF A JOY I DID NOT FEEL. THEN....



INSTANTLY, THE WHOLE HORRIBLE TRUTH DAWNED ON ME. I SUDDENLY SAW HANK FOR WHAT HE WAS, SELFISH, SHALLOW, CONTEMPTIBLE! FOR THIS CREATURE I HAD ABANDONED ARTIE---



MY TORMENT KNEW NO BOUNDS--MY ANGUISH NO RELIEF. SOBS BURNING IN MY THROAT, I TOOK A CAB BACK TO THE HOUSE. HANK FOLLOWED IN HIS CAR. AS WE ENTERED THE HOUSE, THE LANDLADY SCORNFULLY TURNED UPON US!

IT'S ABOUT TIME SOMEBODY TOLD YOU OFF, KELTON. I'VE ONLY TAKEN CARE OF THIS CHILD OUT OF RESPECT TO YOUR LATE WIFE WHOSE HEART YOU BROKE WITH YOUR CRUELTY. YOU TWO ARE SHAMELESS! WHY SHOULD THIS CHILD SUFFER BECAUSE OF YOUR DESPICABLE CRAVING FOR WHAT YOU CALL FUN? TAKE CARE OF HER OR I'LL NOTIFY THE AUTHORITIES!



AND WHEN MRS. SIMMONS LEFT... THAT DAME MEANS NOTHING TO ME, DIANE. LET'S FORGET THE WHOLE THING AND--

MAYBE YOU CAN FORGET IT---BUT I CAN'T! EVERYTHING MRS. SIMMONS SAID ABOUT YOU WAS TRUE! HOW COULD I HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT I CARED FOR YOU!



ARTIE--ARTIE. I MUST GO TO HIM. OH, MY DARLING! I'LL CRAWL ON MY KNEES TO YOU--DO ANYTHING---BUT YOU MUST FORGIVE ME. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!



AND I'VE LET YOU DOWN, TOO, MARY... SOB..SOB..BUT I'LL NOT FORGET. I'LL BEG ARTIE TO MARRY ME, AND THEN I'M COMING BACK FOR GINNY. SHE'LL HAVE A NEW MOTHER AND FATHER--- THE KIND SHE DESERVES!..SOB.. ..SOB... I PROMISE---



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